

IN THE CLAIMS

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A digital signal processing apparatus comprising:

transmitting means for transmitting inquiry information to an information center over a communication line, said inquiry information being generated in association with encoded digital data that have been recorded on a storage medium, said inquiry information being used to indicate whether the digital data was encoded or recorded in a manner consistent with the digital signal processing apparatus;

receiving means for receiving a result of an inquiry conducted by said information center based on said inquiry information;

discriminating means for judging, based on said result of said inquiry, whether said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium are legally purchased data; and

controlling means which, when said discriminating means judges said encoded digital data to be legally purchased data, executes a process to offer an additional service to said customer,

wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means by ~~transmitting moving~~ said encoded digital data from said storage medium to another storage medium.

Claim 2. (Canceled)

Claim 3. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means converting said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium with an algorithm of a predetermined version into digital data having undergone encoding with an algorithm of a more advanced version, before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

Claim 4. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means restoring said encoded digital data onto said storage medium.

Claim 5. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means converting said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium into encoded digital data of a different

bit rate before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

Claim 6. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises furnishing said customer, free of charge, with a product related to a producing party who produces said digital data purchased legally by said customer from said information center.

Claim 7. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising inputting means for inputting identification information for identifying said encoded digital data that are subject to said inquiry,

wherein said identification information input through said inputting means is transmitted to said information center over said communication line.

Claim 8. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said information center comprises:

receiving means for receiving said inquiry information and said identification information for identifying said encoded

digital data that are subject to said inquiry transmitted from said encoded digital signal processing apparatus;

retrieving means for retrieving said digital data subject to said inquiry from said inquiry from said information center in association with said identification information for identifying said encoded digital data;

reference inquiry information generating means for generating reference inquiry information in association with said encoded digital data retrieved by said retrieving means;

comparing means for comparing said reference inquiry information generated by said reference inquiry information received by said receiving means;

inquiry result generating means for generating an inquiry result based on a result of the comparison by said comparing means; and

means for transmitting said inquiry result generated by said inquiry result generating means.

Claim 9. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said reference inquiry information generating means subjects part of said encoded digital data retrieved by said retrieving means to an encoding process executed by a software encoder, the coded data part being compared with said inquiry information by said comparing means.

Claim 10. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising charging means for processing charges;

wherein, when said discriminating means judges that said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium are legally purchased data, said charging means charges one of nothing and a reduced amount on to said customer for said additional service offered to said customer.

Claim 11. (Currently Amended) A digital signal processing method comprising the steps of:

transmitting identification information and inquiry information to an information center over a communication line, said identification information identifying encoded digital data that have been recorded on a storage medium and that are to be transmitted from said terminal device, said inquiry information being generated in association with said digital encoded data, said inquiry information being used to indicate whether the digital data was encoded or recorded in a manner consistent with the digital signal processing method;

receiving a result of an inquiry conducted by said information center based on said inquiry information;

judging, based on said result of said inquiry, whether said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium are legally purchased data; and

when said encoded digital data are judged to be legally purchased data, executing a process of offering an additional service to said customer,

wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by transmitting moving said encoded digital data from said storage medium to another storage medium.

Claim 12. (Canceled)

Claim 13. (previously presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises converting said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium into encoded digital data encoded with an algorithm of a predetermined version, before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

Claim 14. (previously presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises restoring said encoded digital data onto said storage medium.

Claim 15. (previously presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises converting said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium into encoded digital data of a different bit rate, before replacing unconverted encoded digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

Claim 16. (previously presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises furnishing said customer, free of charge, with a product related to a producing party who produced said digital data purchased legally by said customer from said information center.

Claim 17. (previously presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of inputting said identification information for identifying said encoded digital data to said inquiry, wherein said identification information input in said inputting step is transmitted to said information center over said communication line.

Claims 18-26. (Canceled)